



The Invisible Man

H. G. Wells (1866 - 1946)

Read by:	Alex Foster	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
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The Invisible Man was the fifth novel by H. G. Wells and the third of his remarkable series of five “scientific romances”. It was serialized in *Pearson’s Weekly* in 1897 and published in book form that same year. The title character, eventually revealed as Griffin, is a scientist studying optics who discovers a way to change a body’s refractive index to that of air, absorbing and reflecting no light and rendering the body invisible. He successfully tests the invention on a cat and then on himself. His efforts to reverse the effects fail. He wraps himself in bandages and sets off in a snowstorm, finding lodging at a village inn. Testy, unfriendly and reclusive, he spends his days working to find an antidote, venturing out only at night. He runs out of money and falls behind on his bill. A series of burglaries casts suspicion. When his landlady threatens

eviction he partially reveals his invisibility and then escapes apprehension by undressing and taking flight. He enlists a vagrant to help him recover his notebooks and is betrayed. His actions become increasingly desperate. He is shot in a failed attempt to avenge the betrayal and finds refuge in the home of Kemp, a former medical school colleague. He incinerates the boarding house to cover his tracks but finds he cannot manage in the open. He attempts to enlist Kemp in a plan to use his invisibility to conduct a “Reign of Terror” but is foiled, leading to a dramatic, fatal denouement. The premise and the deft portrayal of gradual progression from a gifted obsessive to an insane psychopath have become a staple of the genre and have led to countless productions, adaptations and offshoots.

Herbert George “H. G.” Wells (September 21, 1866 – August 13, 1946) was an English author best known for his science fiction novels; along with Jules Verne, he is sometimes called the father of science fiction. He was born the youngest of four in Bromley, Kent to a father who was a professional cricketer and shopkeeper with a small private income; his mother had been a domestic servant. He became an avid reader at age 8 when a broken leg left him bedridden and likely set him on a path of intensive self-education. At age 11 he was taken from school and apprenticed to a draper after his father’s fractured thigh drastically reduced the family income. Family connections later helped him secure a position as a pupil-teacher at Midhurst Grammar School, which enabled him to win a scholarship to the Normal School of Science. There he studied biology under the tutelage of the noted Thomas Henry Huxley and co-founded the *Science School Journal*, where an early version of the Time Machine appeared. He obtained a teaching certificate and taught at Henley House School. He married his first cousin Isabel in 1891; they separated in 1894 and Wells married Amy Catherine Robbins, later called Jane, in 1895. At that time he published his four great novels called scientific romances in rapid succession: *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), *The Invisible Man* (1897) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898). These books invented the classic scientific themes, made his name and gave him the resources to build a substantial home near Folkestone. He turned to non-fiction in the early 1900’s, addressing subjects of history, politics, and social commentary in addition to science. *The Outline of History* in 1920 was an immensely popular and commercial success. This and other works, many concerning utopian notions of social organization, made him enormously influential, to the degree that critic Malcolm Cowley stated “his influence was greater than any other living writer.”